According to the terms and conditions of the Licence for CMTS, an operator for Telecom Circle Service Area is required to cover 10% of District Headquarters in the Service Area within one year and 50% of District Headquarters within three years. The Licensee is also permitted to cover any other town in a district in lieu of the District Headquarter. The choice of District Headquarters/towns to be covered and further expansion beyond 50% District Headquarters/towns shall lie with the Licensee depending on their business decision. It is not mandatory under the CMTS Licence Agreement to cover 100% of the Service Area.

Provision of free of cost handsets by cellular companies

*270 SHRIMATI MAYA SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether BSNL is considering to provide handsets free of cost to customers as part of its tariff plans as is being done by one of the service providers these days; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) No, Sir. There is no such proposal at present to provide free handsets to customers.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

Procurement of sub-standard paddy

*271. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that FCI procured 2.91 lakh MT of paddy valued at Rs. 160.05 crore during the period from 1997-98 to 2000-2001 which was found to be sub-standard;

(b) what action has been taken against the delinquent officials; and

(c) if no action has been taken, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) to (c) In the Comptroller and Auditor General of India's Report No. 4 of 2003 (PSUs), it was observed that 2.91 lakh MTs of paddy (out of the paddy procured during the years 1997-98 to 2000-01) remained unmilled, being of sub-standard quality.

In this connection, the Food Corporation of India have stated that most of the unmilled paddy relates to the Kharif Marketing Seasons 1997-98 and 1998-99 when there were untimely torrential rains in the major paddy procuring States, which adversely affected the milling quality of the paddy lying in the threshing yards, mandies and procurement centres.

The FCI have since initiated disciplinary proceedings in respect of the erring staff responsible for improper management of the paddy stocks.

Abolition of sugar quotas

*272. DR. A.R. KIDWAI:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether many more sugar mills of Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh have demanded that the quota of sugar should go;

(b) if so, whether Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh are still struk with the huge unsold stocks;

(c) if so, the steps Government are considering in this regard;

(d) whether Government are considering any proposal to further amend the Essential Commodities Act; and

(e) if so, by when a final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) to (e) The supply of sugar through the "regulated release" mechanism is controlled by the Government of India. No representation has lately been received from sugar mills of Maharashtra/Uttar Pradesh in respect of the said mechanism.